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ness everything, or investigate everything for yourself. The knowledge and experience of a single individual, compared with the knowledge and experience of all men and of all ages, is like a small thread of water by the side of a mighty river."

DOÑA AGNES.

A ROMANCE WITHOUT FICTION.

BY MRS. E. VALE SMITH.

CHAPTER VI.

ST. RITA DE CASCIA.

"I believe
In no one's honor which another keeps;
Nor man's nor woman's."

E. B. BROWNING.

THOUGH Francisco had really parted "there and forever" with Don Fuas, he had no intention of parting then or at any time with Doña Agnes; yet how to proceed, even to convey to her his courageous determination was not so clear. He knew that his lady would now be most jealously watched, and his first object was to obtain an interview with her, that they might consult over some definite arrangement for the future. The interruption of their intercourse had been so sudden and unexpected that he had no ready prepared plan for the emergency. The *fidalgo* had bidden him consider his marriage with a *De Lima* "impossible," but that being a word universally ignored by lovers, in all parts of the world, and through all time, it created, as may be imagined, but a temporary feeling of despondency in the brave and faithful heart of Francisco Vieira. Moreover, whatever the Lusitanian soil is deficient in, it is assuredly most prolific in saints, some of whom stand ready to patronize every event in life, every enterprise of war or love, even every desire of the heart. But lest this should not cover ground enough, there is one more potent, it would seem, than all others combined, whom Francisco was fain to invoke for the frustration of Don Fuas. St. Rita de Cascia is the especial patron of "impossibilities," and ever ready to assist his votaries in overcoming hostile combinations of circumstances—furnishing the wit to escape from any imbroglio—to annul the effects of any imprudence, to surmount any difficulty; and has ever been known as some of the more devoted affirm, to have turned back the sun upon the dial, when a faithful lover could not otherwise keep an appointment. Commending himself then to the favor and good offices of St. Rita, Francisco set himself to the more promising task, of removing by his own

efforts, as speedily as might be, the threatened "impossibilities" of the future.

Proceeding at once to the office of O Juiz dos Casamentos or Judge of Marriages, he ascertained from that functionary that it was absolutely necessary to obtain the approval of the Patriarch to a marriage license; that this was seldom given without great scrutiny and delay, unless demanded by the parents of the bride, who usually presented the certificate of betrothal, which it was his own duty to record and witness—but intimated, that if Francisco could obtain a formal written declaration by the lady of her engagement, that he had little doubt but he could procure the Patriarch's signature to the license. Slipping a generous fee into the hand of the official, Francisco left the office in better spirits than he had entered it, hoping through the process indicated soon to procure possession of his bride. But he must first devise how to communicate to her this information and arrange for her coöperation. He was not long in deciding on his course. A high festival of the church was approaching—the annual feast of St. Antonio, whom the reader of general history will remember, was during the struggle against the usurpation of Philip II. of Spain elected generalissimo of the Portuguese army, with a veritable commission made out for his saintship, and an annual salary of 300,000 reals. On the eve of his anniversary, in accordance with established custom, the king himself would proceed to the church dedicated to this saint of novel offices, carrying the salary in good broad gold pieces with him, which the officiating priests were wont most graciously to receive, and we presume in part applied to the maintenance of St. Antonio's shrine, in a splendor befitting the general-in-chief of the royal army. Amid the crowd consequent upon such an occasion, Francisco calculated, that, were Doña Agnes present, even though surrounded by duennas, he could find an opportunity of conveying to her a note explanatory of his projects, and assuring her of his unabated devotion.

How many and striking are the proofs, that every wrong or blunder committed in church, state or social polity, naturally and inevitably involves its counterpart of evil, in the abnormal exhibition of human nature, in its various phases of civil, moral and religious life. The system which prevailed in Southern Europe of keeping the female portion of the population under perpetual watch and guard, and which was in full vigor in Portugal at this period, led to the still common practice in those countries, of using the

opportunities of public worship, for the interchange of love tokens and billet-doux. It was frequently the case, that in the churches alone, could a look of recognition pass, or a word of sympathy or love be whispered to a willing ear, without the intervention of a third party; and this too where the friendship was perfectly sincere, and the love as honorable as that of Vieira for Doña Agnes. But it followed as a matter of course that the altars raised to God alone were too frequently desecrated by the intrusion of unmeet thoughts and words, while prayer-books and breviaries, downcast eyes and muffling veils and cloaks—served but to conceal the secret heart sympathies which should have been permitted a freer and a fitter place for their acknowledgment. It was formerly observed by travellers on the peninsula, that “all the Spanish and Portuguese cavaliers looked alike,” in their black cloaks, slouched hats, dark hair and inevitable moustache. It was not so well known, however, why this dress and hirsute ornament was so universal. It was adopted as if by spontaneous consent soon after the introduction of the Inquisition on that soil, as a partial disguise, and protection against easy recognition by the familiars of the Holy Office. This effort at uniformity of appearance has been gradually abandoned since the suppression of that terribly officious tribunal by Napoleon I., but in Vieira’s time there was need of it.

The eve of the great day of St. Antonio at last arrived, and Francisco early took his position near the door of the church through which he knew any of the De Lima family would enter who should attend upon the ceremonies. With his hat pulled well over his eyes, and his cloak thrown from the right over his left shoulder, completely concealing the lower part of his face, and amid scores of other gentlemen arrayed in exactly the same costume, he awaited with anxious solicitude the coming of the only one whom he cared on that day to see, though king and saint were to pass before him.

He had not long to wait. Before the great procession had arrived, the De Lima carriage drew up in front of the church. In consequence of the intervening crowd, Francisco could not at once discern, if his lady was indeed there, or who accompanied her—but he depended somewhat on her intelligence; for though no word had passed between them since the fatal interview with Don Fuas in the armory, he was persuaded that she would anticipate his use of this occasion. As the party entered the vestibule, the crowd with native politeness made what way they could

for them, and Francisco soon perceived that Agnes was of the number, but accompanied by her father, two aunts, the duenna, and two servants, one bearing the prayer books, and the other the kneeling cushions for the ladies. The crowd soon closing again about them, Francisco dexterously plucked the mantilla of his lady without seeming to have altered his position; when Agnes immediately managed to stumble over some invisible impediment; and half a dozen cavaliers sprang forward to her assistance. Of course Francisco was first and nearest. To raise her, to leave in her hand a closely written scroll of the thinnest paper, and to disappear without waiting for the thanks of the fidalgo, was the work of a moment, and scarcely seemed to interrupt the progress of the party toward the door of the church. Yet the end for which he watched was attained, and Agnes held within her hand, the first message she had received from her lover since their involuntary separation. As may be imagined, she took but little interest in the splendid ceremonies of the evening, and when at last she returned home and could in safety peruse her precious note, she was not surprised to find a plan proposed, for cementing the troth so long since given and so well kept. We will read with her permission a paragraph or two.

“Cannot you manage to go to St. Dominicks to confession next week? I know Father Estavan is usually thought sufficient in your family, but try and persuade your lady mother, that in your present perplexed state of mind, a more experienced and learned guide is needful. She will not, I think, refuse you, for my discretion in keeping out of sight will have allayed her fears of me. I shall be on the watch every morning at 10 o’clock. I have also engaged the services of my ‘female model,’ the young girl whom I have told you, sits to me for costume and figure pieces. I have procured her a walking dress, mantilla and veil exactly like your own in every particular, even to the embroidery of your arms on handkerchief and veil—she is just your height and something the same complexion. I have taught her to walk like you; she has not your eyes, but no matter for that—she will answer. When the good saints shall permit you to come forth, try if possible, as you approach the niche near the east porch of the church, to fall, if but for a moment, behind the dragon who invests you. In that niche will my model be—be sure and keep on the side nearest to it, she will touch you as you pass, and you will step instantly into the niche, while she will as quickly take your place. Leave the rest to me and wait until I come. Before leaving home, inform the duenna that you do not wish to converse; desiring to compose your mind for the duty before you: you will understand hereafter why it will be safest not to talk on this occasion. Be sure and wear the dress and veil in which I last saw you at the Quinta, as it is those which I have imitated. Have

hope, and trust me for doing all that can be done to overcome the impossible." V.

One week later, on a Wednesday morning, Francisco had the satisfaction of seeing Doña Agnes approach the church of St. Dominick, accompanied only by her duenna. His model was in her place, and well instructed how to proceed after exchanging places with Agnes. In the first place she was to keep a little in advance of the duenna that there might be no opportunity for her features being scanned; she was to proceed immediately to the confessional, or if that was occupied to kneel before the large crucifix until the officiating confessor was ready for her, or in some way occupy herself to avoid conversation with the duenna—this was essential. After entering the box she was to consume as much time as possible in confession, and lest the list of imaginary sins should fail, Francisco had supplied her with numerous queries as of "cases of conscience," upon which she was to ask advice and direction. When there was no pretext for remaining longer, on retiring, she was to cover her face with her handkerchief—as no doubt from her length of stay the duenna would be watching for her, and reply at most in monosyllables, if forced to speak to her.

From an opposite alcove, Francisco watched the execution of his plan. He observed Agnes cast a furtive glance around as if looking for him, and then, true to his directions, fall a step behind the duenna at the appointed place.

No word was exchanged between the two young women, not even a look; both drew their veils over their faces, as they exchanged positions. The transfer had occupied scarcely a moment, when the duenna turned round to reprove her young lady for loitering: as she did so she caught what seemed to her a strange, unearthly glance from beneath the veil, which startled her for an instant, but the supposititious Agnes stepped briskly on, as if to make up for the delay, leaving the perplexed lady to wonder and follow at her leisure. As they entered the main body of the church, an old grey headed man emerged from behind the screen shading the confessional—a retiring penitent; thus giving the representative Agnes immediate opportunity to escape any closer investigation. Leaving her in that sacred depository of sins and secrets, we will allow her to occupy the learned Father, while we look after the genuine Agnes and her lover.

As soon as the duenna was out of sight, Francisco came forward and beckoning to Agnes to follow, walked on a few steps and turned the

corner of the street to where a carriage was in waiting.

"Where are we going?" inquired Agnes.

"Only to the office O Juiz dos Casamentos," he replied, and then more fully explained to her the necessity of their betrothal being formally authenticated by that functionary, before application could even be made to the Patriarch for a marriage license. In less than ten minutes' hard driving the office was reached, and Francisco produced the written declaration of the engagement of marriage subsisting between himself and Doña Agnes, to which both then affixed their signatures, the judge adding his own, and a broad seal, in witness of its official character; promising to procure, by the evidence of this document, a license from his superior at the earliest possible moment—which in his own mind he was aware might be weeks, months or years, as the pleasure of the Patriarch dictated. The ceremony occupied but a few minutes, and in less than half an hour Agnes had regained her place in the porch of St. Dominick's, and not long after, once more exchanged places with her representative fresh from the confessional. And here occurred another shock to the nerves of the duenna; for a single moment she saw, or thought she saw, two Agnes de Limas; but she had been ill, her eyes were very weak, and she was not sure that she could trust them. She began trembling with the fear of some evil about to befall her young lady—herself, or the family, she knew not what. She did not dare to question Agnes for fear of alarming her, and so excited had she become, that pleading illness, she was glad to accept the aid of her young lady's arm during their walk homeward. Brooding at night over the singular experiences of the day, she at last felt impelled to relieve her mind by communicating her suspicions to an old gossiping friend, who was the usual depository of the trials and troubles she experienced in the exercise of her duennaship. Seated at her little table whereon with pen in hand she appears carefully and laboriously elaborating the narrative of her disasters and adventures, we will look over her shoulder and see what she has written. The melancholy composition runs thus:

MY BELOVED FRIEND AND COUSIN:

Knowing how full your kind heart is of sympathy, and that you can understand (occupying a similar position) better than any other, the trials and perplexities imposed upon those who are set to guard the heedlessness of youth—required to perform the duties of a parent, while unable to procure the slightest respect—being in fact a servant, yet obliged to maintain a certain state and quality; blamed if one has not eyes

on all sides and which can penetrate the darkness like an owl; expected to have ears like a hare, and able to scent danger like a deer—and all this when one has but human senses, and the rheumatism besides, so that one cannot turn round of a sudden, (as one often needs to do) without almost wrenching body and soul asunder. But these are things that happen every day; what I have now to tell you is more strange and terrible. I expect some dreadful misfortune is impending over me. I have had *such* a fright, but perhaps I ought to fear more for my young lady than myself. You know she has fallen into disgrace with the family on account of the young painter I told you of, and it is likely she will be sent to St. Ann's. In the mean time I am required to redouble my vigilance, as if I had not already worn myself to a shadow;—but to the dreadful part of my story. You know Father Estavan is our chaplain, and usually confesses all the family; but lately my young lady professes to be filled with doubts and questions enough to make one think she was ready to turn heretic, and declares that she requires for the ease of her conscience, a more learned and experienced confessor, and so she gained permission to go once a week to Father Astolfo, who receives penitents at St. Dominick's. Well, as we were proceeding thither this morning, just as we were entering the vestibule, my young lady was suddenly transformed before my eyes; her hair, which is a beautiful brown, was suddenly changed to an unnatural black; her eyes, which are of that lovely blue upon which the De Limas pride themselves as peculiar to their race, assumed not only the same dark color, but had a diabolical expression fearful to behold. The change was but for a moment and seems not to have affected her soul, for she went straight to the confessional, and remained there so long that I was afraid she was taken ill. I think she must have received severe reproof from the holy father, for her sacrilegious doubts, or perhaps a penance which she dreaded, for her face was covered with her handkerchief as if weeping when she came out. I addressed her two or three times, asking if she was faint? She replied not by word, but only shook her head. Well might she weep! for on returning, near the same spot where the horrible transformation had taken place, I saw an apparition of her spirit walk straight out of the solid wall, pass before her and vanish again into the place from which it had emerged. I was so horror struck that I had no power to speak, and should not have dared to, if I could have found a voice. Whether my young lady saw it or not I do not know, but a dreadful idea has haunted me ever since—may the saints forgive me if I wrong her—but I cannot help thinking that she is a Bruxa, one of that heaven accursed sisterhood who, like the ghouls and vampires, spend their nights in diabolical deeds—presided over by the Prince of Darkness, while in the day time they appear just like other people, except that they have sometimes, though ever so beautiful, a fierce and sudden flashing of the eye, such as I am afraid I saw in my young lady this morning. You know that there is no redemption for a Bruxa; their souls are pledged to Satan, with whom they have entered into a compact which he compels them to rehearse every night; and

then, when in the early dawn they return to their homes, woe be to any little infant they may find on the way—they will assuredly suck its life blood even if it is of their own kin, or their own offspring. Is not this shocking to think of? and then if any hapless maiden should visit here she might also become involved in the same curse, for it is mostly the young and beautiful which are inveigled into the Bruxa league. But though I fear the worst, I have a faint hope that she may be only a Lobishome, doomed indeed to fly in the shape of a wild horse a hundred leagues every night, but then her soul might at last be saved if she confessed the truth, while a Bruxa is foredoomed eternally.

It may be that I am mistaken, for no one can know who is a Bruxa without becoming one; I hope for her sake that I am; but if I see anything more to confirm my suspicions, I would not stay here for the world. So pray, my good friend, if you hear of a prospect that would suit me, where I could have charge of a modest and discreet young lady, fail not to remember your distressed and perplexed friend.

THEODORA.

The letter was duly signed and sealed, and the next morning deposited, with trembling hand, in the care of a servant, to be forwarded to its destination by the weekly post. But while the imagination of Theodora had been dwelling on Bruxas and Lobishomes, and unhappy maidens sealed to the Prince of Darkness, another person had been able to make better use of both eyes and ears, on that eventful Wednesday morning, than had the trusted duenna of the De Limas.

CHAPTER VII.

HOW THE DEBT OF HONOR WAS PAID.

"Oh! was there ever tale of human love,
Which was not also tale of human tears?
Died not sweet Desdemona? Sorrowed not
Fair patient Imogene? and she whose name
Lives among lovers, Sappho, silver-voiced,
Was not the wailing of her passionate lyre
Ended forever in the dull deaf sea?
Must it be thus? Oh! must the cup that holds
The sweetest vintage of the vine of life
Taste bitter at the dregs? Is there no story,
No legend, no love passage which shall bend,
Even as the bow that God had bent in heaven
Promising respite to the rain of tears?"

A few days after the authentication of the lovers' betrothal before the Judge of Marriages, a young lad might be seen in the garden of the Quinta da Luz talking with one of the servants belonging to the place. Doña Isabella, who was walking near, but screened from their observation by a row of young almond trees, caught the sound of her daughter's name uttered by the stranger lad: "The senhora Agnes looked lovely," he said, "but very pale, and her gallant looked as proud as any fidalgo; my master says," he added, "that he will do his best to get the marriage license for them without the least delay for that the Senhor Vieira had remembered him like a gentleman."

Doña Isabella, certainly not in the habit of listening to servants' gossip, might be excused if she harkened to every word of this. Having heard so much, she could restrain her anger no longer and suddenly appearing to the eyes of the talkers, demanded of the young lad who he was, and insisted on his repeating the whole of the tale he had just reported, without abatement or concealment. It proved that he was page to the Juiz dos Casamentos, and had been present when Francisco and Agnes came to the office; had heard the paper read, saw the names signed and had himself put the document away in his master's desk. He knew both Doña Agnes and her lover by sight and name, having been frequently to the Quinta, to see the person, whom he had just been conversing with. Doña Isabella could not doubt the truth of the story.

Smothering her mortification, and concealing her previous ignorance of the transaction from her servant and the page, she hurried at once to the duenna's apartment, (where Agnes was also sitting at her embroidery), in no very amiable frame of mind. Without apparently noticing her daughter, the excited lady exclaimed:

"And so, Madam Theodora, you are also leagued against me, and have allowed that imprudent and willful girl to go and make a legal declaration of betrothal under pretext of going to confession! Pray how many gold pieces did you receive for that good service, and how many more do you expect from me for your care and fidelity?"

The lady stood with angry and scornful eyes bent upon the luckless duenna, who, perfectly innocent of the charge, and scarcely comprehending it, was at last enabled to stammer forth:

"What is it you say, senhora, that I have betrayed my charge! May all the saints forsake me if I have taken my young lady anywhere but to St. Dominick's, or lost sight of her for a single minute—except while she was with Father Astolfo. Speak for me, Agnes," she implored, turning to that self-conscious one, "you know I have never left you, or been to any forbidden place with you."

"It is true what Theodora says, she has been nowhere with me but to confession," said Agnes, firmly.

"And you deny then that you have been to the judge's and signed a betrothal certificate with Francisco?" said Doña Isabella, for the first time turning to her daughter.

"Nay, my mother, I did not say that I had not been elsewhere. I have surely made fast my troth, but blame not Theodora—she knew not of it."

All this while the poor duenna sat perfectly bewildered. She was sure Agnes had never left her side for an instant, yet she now heard her acknowledge that she had been absent long enough to complete the forbidden ceremony, and she was quite sure now that she was a diabolical Bruxa, able to become visible or invisible at any moment, and not half so good as a Lobishome.

But the mother was not to be so pacified. "Not blame Theodora!" she exclaimed with increasing excitement, menacing that unfortunate individual with a sudden attitude suggestive of personal violence. "If she is not to blame, who is? What is she here for but to see that you commit no escapades, and yet she falls asleep I suppose in the church, while you walk off at your pleasure with your lover—pretty confession indeed!"

And so she continued to storm on in the true peninsular fashion, not at the principal delinquent, Doña Agnes, but at her subordinate guard, whom it was usual to make the scapegoat and to consider the really responsible party, if a young lady failed in duty or propriety.

"But we will have no more such frolics," she concluded, "since Theodora understands her duty no better, I will keep you for the present under my own eye; and there shall be no more visits to St. Dominick's, depend on it."

Having thus relieved her mind and laid out her programme for the immediate future, Doña Isabella went to consult her liege lord as to what was to be done under this new and serious aspect which the affair had taken. The matter was talked over, and it was decided that Agnes must at once conclude an engagement with her new suitor or be sent immediately to the Convent of St. Ann's.

This manner of disposing of refractory young ladies has been so often made the theme of romancers and novelists, that we would willingly reject such an episode *as an invention* to help out our story, but as this tale happens to be founded on fact, we cannot erase it from the life of Agnes de Lima, to whom it proved a terrible and most wearisome reality. Nor can we contemplate the facility with which parents brought themselves to consign, with so little feeling, their own children and other young relatives to perpetual imprisonment; sometimes to gratify pride, sometimes as an act of self-sacrifice and devotion, but quite as often through mere whim, caprice or the tyranny of power. The dogmas of Rome seemed for ages stronger than God or Nature; requiring the sword of a military conqueror to give them the death thrust in southern Europe.

Convents and nuns have now become, in a great measure, subjects for jest and almost disbelief in their actual entity. But in Vieira's time, the first half of the 18th century, there was in the city of Lisbon alone, over twelve hundred monks and as many nuns. We find nothing amusing in that fact—while every year, and almost every month in the year, witnessed new-made victims to this system of ecclesiastical imprisonment. And when at last the formal family council was held and Agnes obliged to make election between immediate marriage with Narcisus or assume the veil, it proved no romancing to her, but rather a choice between a life-long perjury, or a living death.

Gathered in the grand drawing-room in addition to the immediate family, were several near relatives on either side, who had come there by invitation to hear the result, just as they would have come to a funeral or a bridal; and one or the other of these appeared to be the end of these formalities.

"Agnes," said her mother, whose passion had now subsided and who still hoped for submission, "be seated here beside me," pointing to a footstool at her feet; "you know how your brother's heart is set on concluding this match with his friend. Your father and I favor it, and we might justly command your obedience, but it would add very much to my happiness to know that you persisted in no aversion to Narcisus. Speak freely, child, and if there is anything that can be done to gratify you in the matter of settlement it shall be as you wish. As for your foolish betrothal, that can be easily revoked—your marriage with Francisco, I assure you, is impossible; I thought better of you than to imagine that your favors to him augured anything serious."

Agnes, during this set speech, had covered her face with her hands. She felt the scornful eyes of her brother pierce through them; she felt, though she could not see, the settled determination of an old fidalgo's pride gathering on her father's brow; she looked up and saw the anxious and yet impatient expression of her mother's face, without one particle of pity or relenting in it, and the trial was more bitter than she could bear; she burst into tears—only sobbing out, "I cannot marry Narcisus."

"What!" exclaimed Don Fuas, "not marry him after I have given my consent, and your brother has pledged his honor for the alliance! Did I ever hear of such obstinacy! Father Estavan, acquaint her with the alternative," said the old gentleman rising, and professing to leave the room in indignation, while in reality, he was

touched with his daughter's grief and sought this mode of escaping from the unhappy scene which he knew must follow.

"Daughter," said the priest, "I would fain heal rather than wound, but indeed this is a subject upon which I can but counsel you to submission; for though you may not now feel any special regard for your noble bridegroom, believe me, custom will wear away any little bias that exists in your mind against him. I am persuaded you will be to him a good and faithful wife, and love will come in time, the reward of duty performed."

"Nay, Father," said Agnes rising, "let me know the worst. I will not dispute what you say, for you have ever been my friend—but I shall never marry Narcisus."

"Will you not, will you not!" exclaimed Gonzalo. "Will you disgrace me just to gratify your own foolish whims? Shall I?"

"Peace, peace, my son," interrupted Father Estavan, "leave us alone with your sister. Perhaps when she fully realizes that there is no hope, under any circumstances, of her union with Francisco, but that if she persist in her refusal, the convent doors must close upon her forever, she will be more amenable to reason. Understand you this, daughter, the only alternative which your father's displeasure leaves you is the veil?"

And added Doña Isabella, "Can you give up all the pleasures of life just as you are beginning to know something of them—give up the society of all your relatives and friends just to gratify this childish obstinacy? For remember you will not gain Francisco by refusing Narcisus, but will be deprived of the opportunity of any future choice."

"Must I decide now?" inquired Agnes, with recovered calmness.

"Your father has promised to send Narcisus word of your acceptance to-morrow, and expects you hereafter to receive him as your affianced husband. But one excuse will avail for a failure—you must assent to these arrangements, or announce your determination to retire from the world and be wedded to Christ."

"To-morrow then I will decide;" and now, with your permission, will retire to reflect upon what I shall do."

"And may the blessed Virgin guide you aright," ejaculated the kindly priest, as Agnes withdrew. Father Estavan had too much of the milk of human kindness in his heart to make a good thorough going priest, forgetful of everything else but his order.

* * * * *

To the eye of the common observer Agnes de Lima presented very much the same aspect as many other young ladies in her position of life, much of her time being occupied in a similar routine to that of others of her sex in that age and place. The morning was principally given to religious exercises under Father Estavan's direction; the formal dinner occupied a couple of hours, then there was a siesta, long or short as she pleased; a drive, ride or walk, or the reception of friends closed the day. The externals of her life had as yet flowed in the common channel, but within herself there had been for years a strange discordance between the formal and profitless life she seemed to lead, and the real inward development of her mind. It has been mentioned in a previous chapter that Agnes had in early life an English governess, from whom she received her first impulse toward individuality of character, and which had been materially assisted and developed through the aid of a collection of books accidentally left by her teacher at the Quinta, and consigned by the family to darkness and obscurity, but which had been discovered by Agnes, and privately read and reread with an understanding and intelligence of which she was quite unsuspected by her own family and probably by most of her acquaintance. These books were not controversial, and some of them, at least, had never been named in the Index Expurgatoris; they consisted of a few devotional essays, poems, histories, biographies and plays, among which were several of Shakspeare's, but they were all more or less imbued with those inherent principles of Protestantism, which recognize to the full individual responsibility, repudiating the idea of any authority over the conscience but that of God's claims; and holding every single soul to the work of its own redemption, without trusting to the aid of ecclesiastical machinery, or the intervention of human authority. These private mental tonics were not without their influence, in her present exigency.

The time given for her decision was so short that there seemed no opportunity for making other arrangements, and she saw that she must prepare to go to St. Ann's; but she had strong hopes that Francisco's application to the Patriarch would be sustained, and that if a license could be procured before her novitiate expired she might still escape taking the black veil. Through a person hereafter to be introduced to the reader, Agnes managed to send the following brief note to Francisco, explaining the dilemma in which she was placed.

"There is no present help for it, I see that I must go to the convent—but remember, I go not of my own free will. I am your betrothed bride, and whatever I am compelled to do outwardly, I will keep my troth to you. Never rest till you release me from this vile durance. Go to the Patriarch—I am sure he will acknowledge our betrothal, and with his license you may relieve me any time during the novitiate. If he delays, give him no rest till you succeed."

The sudden danger into which she was thrust of being obliged to assume vows which she neither desired to make, nor intended to keep, if escape was possible; or of taking upon herself the equally false and far more repulsive obligations of a forced marriage, had fully awakened all the latent strength of her mind, and prevented her from falling into despair, or succumbing to what really appeared like destiny.

In those hours—brief hours of night which preceded the morning on which she was to decide her own fate, perhaps for all future time—in which she was to speak the word which might shut her out forever from the presence of her betrothed—in that solemn interim in which she threw from her soul with deepest scorn the temptation which had been adroitly held out to her, as a last argument, that she might satisfy her friends, by the proposed marriage and gratify herself by retaining still her lover—in those hours, the thoughtful spirit of the isolated young girl, brooded more tenderly over the fear of committing impiety by submitting even to pronounce the vows about to be imposed upon her, than they did on the possibility of Francisco's failure to procure her release. She felt the real loneliness of her position, but was not dismayed, standing firmly

"On great Nature's altar stairs
That slope through darkness up to God."

But there was no middle path for her to tread; she must select one or the other to which she was hedged in, and she chose what seemed to her the least sinful—for she rightly considered, that there was during the whole year of her novitiate a possibility of release from convent vows, but from false marriage vows there could be none but death.

Often had Agnes felt the incompleteness of her breviary to express the wants and aspirations of her soul. The unuttered prayers of her heart, like the floating clouds of some fair summer day, had added beauty and variety to her emotions, but had never coalesced and burst with their weight of words, like the fertilizing showers from the aggregated cloud-forms of the sky. But now, gathering with all their force, oppressing

her heart with hitherto unknown fears, the strong cry of nature rent the veil of education and habit, and for the first time in her life, Agnes prayed in her own words, uttered her own wants in the ever open ear of her Heavenly Father. Oh! how much stronger did she feel for this simple effort to grasp divine aid without the machinery which was wont to formalize and chill the heart, instead of rendering it that comfort and support which such inventions of human ingenuity were piously intended to afford.

Now, too, came to her aid the remembrance of many brave and noble thoughts which her English reading had been secretly nourishing in her mind even while she scarcely suspected their influence—these, like giant arms, upheld her from sinking into slavish fear, and encouraged her to hope, that as other courageous souls had been enabled to pass through a corrupt age with unsoiled consciences, that she might at least be forgiven, if she abstained from all voluntary assumption of insincere and abhorrent obligations. Shut up to her own reflections, to reconcile as best she could the actual mental servility which pervaded the society in which she moved, with the ideas of personal accountability which she had first gathered from those strong old English writers, and which by constantly revolving in her mind, had become completely familiarized to her thoughts, she had in fact, out of the crude and imperfect materials which had fallen in her way, elaborated for herself the grand, bold, and, for her, dangerous idea, that mental and spiritual freedom was the natural right of herself and every reasonable creature. This conception, in its dawn, was to her what the creation of a new sun would be to us—a palpable glorious increase of light and heat, and she drew from it intellectual and moral sustenance as the earth-rooted plant draws health and life from the great visible source of light and heat.

It is difficult, nay, perhaps impossible, for us who have grown up with these ideas from our earliest remembrance, accurately to calculate the effect of their first recognition, on a mind naturally acute and inquiring, but cramped and stultified by an education which has for its very basis the doctrine of mental submission to dogmatical authority. Without this peculiar inward moral revolution of her nature, her outward life might still not have been very different from what it was; she might still, from other and lower motives have taken nearly the same course in regard to her lover, to gratify passion or self-will; but her internal life would have been in all things reversed, for the purifying motive would have

been absent. Patient under destiny, yet energetic in her own behalf; true to the integrity of her own conscience, through every temptation to sully it—retaining a lively faith in the realities of a religion, which was made the pretext for destroying her own happiness, she chose to preserve the faith of a betrothed wife, instead of seeking the meretricious praise so lavishly awarded to candidates for celibacy, believing that where the heart was not severed from earthly ties, it was an affront to heaven to profess the offering of a vestal heart.

The morning succeeding this sorrowful vigil Father Estavan was deputed to wait upon Agnes in her own room and ascertain if she had come to a “more reasonable state of mind.” As he entered she bowed her head, as had ever been her custom, to receive his daily blessing; the old man gave it on this occasion with peculiar feeling and tenderness, but it fell not on her heart like the *benedictus* which she had already received from heaven.

“And now, daughter,” he began, “what is your decision? Hast thou not bethought thee of the folly of withstanding all thy friends? I trust thou hast come to a more conformable spirit.” But this trust seemed not very deep-seated, for he had looked into her eyes, where he already deciphered the refutation of any such hope.

“Father,” said Agnes, “I believe you would not counsel me against what you thought my duty or happiness—you whom I have always revered and obeyed; but in this matter I shall never have but one answer to make. How can you advise me to marry this new wooer when you know my faith is plighted to another?”

“But,” replied the priest, “doth not the holy Scriptures say ‘if a woman make a vow, being yet a virgin in her father’s house, and he hearing of it, disallow it, her vow she may break without sin?’”

“Which ought I to obey,” asked Agnes, in reply, “my natural father or you?”

“Why you know, daughter, that the Church has delegated all power on earth to its priests; your first duty is to obey the teachers the church has appointed.”

“Then if you sanctioned my betrothal while my parents disallowed it, I should be justified in fulfilling it, should I not?”

“Undoubtedly, but remember I do not; I join my commands to his: nor can you disobey without sin.”

“But you forget,” said Agnes, growing bolder as she found he could not be secured as an ally,

"that a higher authority than yours has sanctioned it—the Patriarch himself has no doubt ere this, or will speedily, give his approval."

"True, but still there are means by which you may be released"—

"But you know I do not wish to be released, and Father Estavan, if you are indeed my friend, urge me no more. If I am to be compelled to take the veil, I must submit to force, but my heart will never consent, and God himself will yet release me from enforced vows."

Father Estavan had neither heart nor logic to continue the argument. He had loved Agnes all her life as his own child, and he felt much more inclined to sympathize with her than to add to her unhappiness; but he loved also his own ease and peace and fully appreciated his comfortable position as Chaplain to the De Limas. He could not therefore risk his place and living by openly taking her part; he was fain therefore to content himself with expressing the strongest wishes that she would consent to the marriage for the sake of the peace and harmony which would be promoted by it, and in trying to excite her apprehensions of the strictness of convent seclusion. But he found her as immovable upon that consideration as every other, and really grieved at the idea of her being parted from her family in anger, he bade her a sorrowful good morning and returned to Don Fuas and her mother to relate the ill success of his efforts.

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Two days later a close carriage might have been seen approaching the large iron gate which secured the entrance to the convent grounds which had been selected for the future residence of the "obstinate" young Doña. Inside were her mother, two aunts, Theodora and Agnes. Watching them at a short distance, but unobserved by each other, were two young men, one of whom, as he stood in moody silence against the close high wall, displayed upon his finger a valuable diamond ring upon which he glanced now and then with an angry and mortified air. As the heavy key of the gate was turned and Doña Agnes, between her two aunts, and followed by her mother and Theodora, stepped within the precincts of St. Ann's, the other young man who had been playing somewhat daintily, and yet dangerously, with his sword the while, advanced suddenly to the first, and drawing the weapon from its scabbard struck the jewelled hand violently with the broad side of his sword, exclaiming as he did so: "Coward and braggart, is this the way you keep your oath!"

Gonzalo looked at his assailant, Narcisus, and

felt in vain for his misericorde with which to resent the insulting blow; but he had left it at home and he had nothing at hand with which to retort upon his adversary. A few paces from them stood a Galician water-carrier, cutting a melon with one of those strong cut-and-thrust clasp-knives provided with spring and hilt and a saddle at the end of the handle on which to place the thumb that it may be driven with the greater force, such a knife as the mountain muleteers carry for ordinary use, defence or assault, as the case might be. It was the work of a moment for Gonzalo to seize it, and another to thrust it deep into the breast of Narcisus. The water-carrier raised a cry, flying at the same time from the scene, which brought two officers to the spot, who immediately took Gonzalo in custody. Narcisus had fallen to the ground apparently fatally wounded, and help being obtained was borne to his own home. An explanation of the cause of the affray—or what was more effective perhaps, a heavy bribe to the soldiers, sufficed to release Gonzalo from duress in a few hours. He was uncertain of how effectually he had paid his "debt of honor," but he never forgave himself for leaving his stiletto at home, and being compelled to avail himself of so vulgar a weapon as a water-carrier's clasp knife to resent an insult!

(To be continued.)

ON ÆSTHETICS IN ARCHITECTURE.

II.

A paper by LEOPOLD EIDLITZ, in continuation of one read before the American Institute of Architects.

(See ante p. 89.)

ARCHITECTURE being the art of imbuing with beauty and expression monuments representing human purposes and ideas, derives its constitutional motives from these purposes and ideas; and her means of expression from those sources which operate upon our visual organs. Or in other words: Inasmuch as the effect produced by architectural monuments is perceived only through the medium of sight, the means of producing that effect are confined to a distribution of masses, of light and shade, and of color.

OF THE DISTRIBUTION OF MASSES.

To arrive at proper rules for the distribution of masses in architectural monuments let us examine nature and observe how she arranges her masses and with what results. I will mention a few undisputed facts as to the arrangements of masses in nature.

1. Everything in nature is in a degree symmetrical and nothing perfectly so. Where sym-